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War Against Childhood Obesity: Traction Towards Family's Aspect

The prevalence of obesity in children is on steep rise, and strong relationship exists between childhood obesity and non-communicable diseases in their adulthood. This rise in obesity intensifies the need to increase the level of physical activity and healthy eating among children [1]. The 2016 Indian Report Card discussed best practices among developed nations and what India can learn from their practice [1,2]. This complex issue should be addressed through multifactorial intervention involving all stakeholders [1]. These interventions should be culture-specific, considering socioeconomic status, initiated at home, and carried out in school.

Researchers have stated the importance of family in healthy behavior-modelling of the child [3]. As India is a family-centric country, there is no doubt on its role in the child's wellbeing; however, involvement of family has not been evident in the study interventions conducted in India. Family communication can be pivotal in increasing physical activity, healthy eating patterns and decreasing sedentary time [4,5].

The beliefs and Indian culture perceives child's weight to be connected with prosperity. Parents do not consider an obese child to be unhealthy, which possibly leads to reduced family involvement, thereby decreased motivation of child towards a healthy lifestyle.

Hence, there is a strong need, to include family education and participation in childhood obesity interventions. These interventions should begin with assessing the knowledge and awareness among family members regarding healthy eating and regular physical activity. The next step should be education and implementation of these lifestyle modifications. This will help families to encourage increased physical activity at

home, discourage sedentary time by spending less time in the digital world. Educating families and stakeholders about healthy eating pattern will help in cutting down on junk food in home and school, and increase healthy eating, thereby decreasing the risk of developing early non-communicable diseases. These lifestyle modifications can be achieved only when there is intention driven collaboration among policy makers, teachers and family members, so as to locally and globally advocate and implement policies to curb obesity.

Therefore, 'war' against this national and critical health issue should be initiated where the family will have to be the commander of one of the battalions in the war zone. The notion of collaborative effort should be emphasized to promote healthy lifestyle in our children, our hope for the future.

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